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MONTANA LABOR MARKET

Monthly Review of
EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK, LABOR SUPPLY, LABOR DEMAND, CURRENT EMPLOYMENT

MONTANA STATE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE
Division of Unemployment Compensation Commission of Montana

Albert F. Root, Commissioner — Chadwick H. Smith, Chairman — Paul R. McClure, Commissioner

Mitchell Building — P. O. Box 1728 — Helena, Montana

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Season Job-Resumptions Boost Employment Total

Resumption of seasonal employment accounted for an increase of 5,500 in the number of wage earners on industrial payrolls June 15 as compared with a month earlier. Manufacturing led the major industry groups with a 1,400 gain, of which 1,200 was in the lumber industry. June estimates place employment in non-farm industries at 168,800, or 2,000 above the previous June record of 166,800 a year ago, and 5,500 above that of last May.

1,400 More in Manufacturing

In addition to the 1,400 gain in manufacturing, contract construction employed 1,000 more in June than in May. Retail and wholesale trade, and service industries, responded to the expanding economy with increases of 900 and 1,100 respectively, during the month period. Government added 800 to its payrolls during the month, transportation and ultilties 300, finance and insurance 100, while a sag in total mining employment, all of it in metal mining, was registered.

Year-Ago Level Surpassed

As compared with employment in June, 1955, the current figures are up 2,000. Contract construction accounts for 800 of this increase; government agencies at federal, state and local levels 1,100; manufacturing employment 400, and again this increase was concentrated in the lumbering industry; finance and insurance maintained its long-established upward trend with a gain of 500 in the year interval.

Trade Unchanged from 1955

Employment in trade circles remained unchanged over the year period, at 40,900. Minor declines indicated are: 300 in transportation and utilities, mining 300, service industries 200.

Completes 18-Month Cycle

June was the eighteenth successive month reflecting increased employment over the same month in the preceding year. Not since December, 1954, has a receding figure been recorded and that was by a meager 700. June employment was 151,000 in 1949, advanced to 159,900 in June, 1952, receded slightly the following year. Average of June employment, 1949 to 1955, was 158,000, more than 10,000 below last month's record.

Crowds Close to Employment Record

Employment in June numbered only 2,600 below that of the record month of August, 1955, when 171,400 were on similar payrolls. The average increase from June to August in the past seven years has been 2,500, pointing to possibility of a new record employment being established this season. Present employment figures are up 16,600 from the February low level of 152,200.

INCREASED SEASONAL LABOR DEMANDS TRIM STATE'S JUNE SUPPLY TO MID-SEASON LEVEL

Increased seasonal labor demands in June reduced Montana's supply of labor to 4,694, its lowest point since last November. A year ago the labor reserve, as represented by active job applicants at employment service offices, numbered 5,274 and in 1954 it was 5,403. Average for July 1 during 1949 to 1955 was 4,561. Operators in the labor market are aware of possible shortages arising in the three busiest hiring months of the year—July, August and September.

Absorbs Many School Releases

Present moderate level of the reserve labor supply was reached despite the heavy influx into the labor market of youths and teachers rlasd from classrooms in May and June. New applications in June were 4,330, a rise of 600, about 16 percent, from a year ago, much of which was from the classroom.

Supply Is Approaching Irreducible Minimum

Most of the state's heaviest employing industries normally reach their payroll peak in July, August and September, which this year will probably lead to depletion of the present labor supply to its irreducible minimum. About 40 percent of the applicants at the close of June were women. Some further registrations of school youth are expected and in-migrants will be depended upon to help bolster the waning supply as the demand strengthens. Shortages are already reported in skilled building trades, some professional lines, and in experienced clerical workers. No projects have as yet been actually stymied by lack of labor supply.

Work-Applicant Count in Review

	1956	1955	1954	1953	1952	1951
January	12,676	12,887	12,270	10,616	10,370	11,685
March	12,663	11,979	11,075	9,323	9,392	10,844
May	5,105	5,565	6,191	4,324	3,276	4,312
June	4,694	5,274	5,403	3,910	2,957	4,240
July		4,628	4,283	3,249	2,191	3,260
September		2,781	3,782	2,288	1,388	2,304
November		6,968	5,617	5,048	4,135	4,341

*Estimated

Lumbering Nears Peak Employment

Lumbering and logging hires in timbered areas of the state were an important factor in reducing the available labor supply during June. That industry is now near its peak of employment, equalling previous records. Lumber employment is among the types most sensitive to seasonal changes in Montana and its spring resumption is frequently deferred in large part into June because of adverse snow and soft road conditions in the forest.

Heavy Construction Demand Ahead

Construction contractors added to their working force, expanding about 8 percent in June, but have not yet reaeched the peak of their seasonal employment. Contractors on the Noxon dam and the Glasgow and Great Falls airbases, as well as a new power plant at Sidney, are reported as much below their expected August staffing. Much the same situation exists at building projects in Helena, Bozeman, Missoula, Billings and Butte.

Highway Crews at Record Strength

Employment on the state highway system, in construction and maintenance, reached 2,350 workers in June, equalling the previous top figure set in June of 1952. The June figure was nearly 400 above that of a year ago and exceeded May's employment by 167. Work was in progress on 64 road jobs, incolving 416 miles of roadway, and on 15 bridge and utility projects at contract price of $2,046,000. Maintenance and repair crews represented 814 of the highway employment.

More Expansion Ahead

Further expansion of the state highway crews this year is likely. Contracts on 75 miles of highway improvement and $1,575,000 worth of bridges have been let but were not active in June. Eight small road jobs were completed in June, embracing 40 miles of highway.

Trade-Service Hiring Active

Prevalence of normal summer tourist traffic is reflected in active hiring by trade units and service establishments throughout the state. Forest service summer projects were started in June and are expected to increase their employment in July and August.

Food Processing Plants to Start

Food processing in fruit and vegetable plants exerted slight pressure on labor reserves in June but is expected to require substantial numbers in the two months ahead. Much of this labor is obtained from households and other sources outside the normal labor market. Near failure of the sweet cherry crop in the Flathead country reduces the prospective demand for cherry pickers and packers to a minimum.

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Along the Hiring Line—Field Summary July 1

ANACONDA, Deer Lodge, Philipsburg—(66 jobseekers; 41 men, 25 women; 11 men and 9 women over 45). Labor demand weak through June; construction was at moderate pace, mostly on homes and building repair, roads, in Anaconda, high school additions at Philipsburg and Drummond. Smelter at stable pace, continuing rotation of repair and remodeling work in one department to another, workers moving to jobs in other sections.

BILLINGS, Columbus, Hardin, Hysham, Laurel, Red Lodge, Roundup—(591 jobseekers; 370 men; 221 women; 109 men and 62 women over 45). New work applications heavy during June, mostly school youth and transient, the latter heavier than normal. Labor demand confined largely to service industries and in unskilled brackets, with sprinkling of professional and clerical hiring.

BOZEMAN, Ennis, Three Forks, Trident—(274 jobseekers; 179 men; 95 women; 17 men and 8 women over 45). Construction hiring is on schedule, with a sufficient supply. Addition to a dairy plant started in June. Building of student union and physical education buildings at college in full progress, with complete crews. New high school building well started, will use more men as it gets above foundation stage. Ample supply of college and school youths at hand for all but skills. Two road jobs proceeding, heavy equipment, supply sufficient. New asbestos plant expected to open shortly, with 30 employees. Vegetable cannery to start July 15.

BUTTE, Virginia City, Whitehall—(617 jobseekers; 380 men; 237 women; 45 men and 56 women over 45). Usual summer decline in miner applicants, augmented by uncertainty of contract until end of month, when new agreement reached. Packing plant remodeling is concluded, with call-back of working crew in early July. Construction of highways and buildings on extensive scale is now in full stride. Shortage of carpenters. Heavy registration of students for summer work kept labor supply up.

CUT BANK—(92 jobseekers; 64 men, 28 women; 9 men and 3 women over 45). Labor supply spread into all groups, no shortages in prospect. Oil industry is staffed for the summer season, no heavy hiring in sight. Addition to elevator started in June and eight homes under way. Work nearly completed on new school buildings. Library project halted by non-arrival of steel. Two new contracts for enlargement of radar installation.

DILLON—(73 jobseekers; 46 men, 27 women; 21 men and 9 women over 45). Hires at small mines increased seasonally in June, one project put on an extra shift. Tungsten mill reopened the 5th. New iron prospect satisfactory, negotiating for rail lines to the deposit area. Employment of 30 men foreseen later in season. Extensive deposits of thorium also being explored. Forest and city projects under way, fully staffed. About 50 workers on various buildings, new homes, and business structures.

GLASGOW, Fort Peck, Malta, Opheim—(63 jobseekers; 23 men, 40 women; 2 men and 3 women over 45). Labor demand for new airbase is spotty, rendered uncertain by lack of needed materials and supplies; full staffing may be delayed into August, when about 700 are to be on the job. Twenty residences at Glasgow, a new bank building, service station and service buildings, two road jobs, have helped to reduce the jobseeker list. Supply in balance.

GLENDIVE, Circle, Wibaux—(74 jobseekers; 53 men, 21 women; 20 men and 9 women over 45). Construction pace continues, no increase expected until arrival of materials now lacking. Oil field work is steady, calls for replacements only. Tourist traffic beginning to reflect in increased trade and service demands. Drouth has afflicted most non-irrigated lands, irrigated sections provide sustained labor demand.

GREAT FALLS, Choteau, Fort Benton, Stanford—(521 jobseekers; 361 men, 160 women; 86 men and 40 women over 45). Registration of students replenished the applicant supply in June. Hires on construction, and for trade and service expansion to meet tourist traffic, increased late in June. Contracts up for July letting on two million for airbase additions and three million for street paving. Work in progress on school buildings, homes and commercial structures, some shortages of painters, bricklayers and carpenters.

HAMILTON, Stevensville—(76 jobseekers; 51 men, 25 women; 11 men and 7 women over 45). Labor demand below a year ago. Sawmills releasing men as mechanization progresses. Construction program light, new gas line bringing in its own crews. Fluorspar mine reopened in June, two months later than year ago.

HAVRE, Chinook, Harlem—(56 jobseekers; 28 men, 28 women; 5 men and 7 women over 45). Fewer student work applicants than in 1955. No large construction jobs, several new projects on homes and business buildings. Dry weather has reduced farm demand for the haying season, transient workers probably sufficient for that need.

HELENA, Boulder, Garrison, Townsend, White Sulphur Springs—(187 jobseekers; 112 men, 75 women; 10 men and 13 women over 45). Construction of highways, streets and buildings will reach employment peak in July. Several road jobs in the Lincoln, Townsend, and White Sulphur areas are nearing completion. Building program at college well under way, foundations in, forms and cement pouring in progress. Farm demand in July will be for hayfield workers.

KALISPELL, Columbia Falls, Eureka, Whitefish—(796 jobseekers; 519 men, 277 women; 123 men and 36 women over 45). Seasonal upswing in logging, lumbering, trade, service and forestry started in June, may develop shortages of lumber skills in August. Construction program less in volume than recent years. Aluminum plant fully staffed at around 500.

LEWISTOWN, Harlowton, Ryegate, Winnett—(78 jobseekers; 30 men, 48 women; 14 men and 10 women over 45). Labor demand for building below a year ago, drouth conditions affect farming economy and that of all other business in the area. Gypsum plant dropped its schedule from six to five days a week, may resume full time later in summer. No large projects in sight.

LIVINGSTON, Big Timber—(96 jobseekers; 54 men, 42 women; 16 men and 8 women over 45). Labor demand brighter. Railroad has four extra gangs using 360 men on track repair; reconversion job at the railroad shops is now due for July start. Two oil outfits are prospecting this area. Park improvement project has been

LABOR MARKET REFLECTORS

Employment—	June 1956	May 1956	June 1955	June Avg. 1950-1955
Industrial Employment	168,800	163,300	166,800	159,000
New Job Applicants	4,330	3,658	3,717	3,407
Job Applicants, End of Month	4,694	5,105	5,274	4,599
Insured Unemployment—	**July 6 1956**	**June 8 1956**	**July 8 1955**	**Avg. 1st July Wk. 1950-1955**
New and Renewal Claims	221	195	222	199
Unemployed Weeks Filed	1,115	1,761	1,468	1,342
Total Unemployment Claims	1,336	1,956	1,690	1,541

EIGHT YEARS OF MONTANA INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT TOTALS, BY MONTHS (in Thousands)

	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Aver.
1949	137.1	135.5	137.7	144.0	147.3	151.0	150.0	150.1	149.8	148.2	146.1	143.3	145.0
1950	133.2	132.2	135.2	142.1	147.3	153.6	154.9	157.1	156.8	152.2	150.7	148.8	147.0
1951	141.9	139.4	140.3	145.9	149.4	154.1	153.5	154.6	154.3	152.4	151.7	150.6	149.0
1952	140.5	140.7	143.0	149.7	154.8	159.9	159.5	161.2	160.4	157.9	156.0	154.9	153.2
1953	145.8	144.5	146.3	149.7	153.1	158.0	158.5	160.6	160.3	159.6	157.6	156.4	154.2
1954	146.7	145.5	147.2	151.1	155.7	161.6	164.1	165.4	154.8	153.9	158.2	155.7	155.0
1955	148.4	146.8	147.4	153.4	158.4	166.8	169.1	171.4	170.0	167.3	161.7	159.6	160.1
1956	152.3	152.2	152.7	158.0	163.3	168.8							

Along the Hiring Line—Field Summary July 1

(Continued from previous page)

slowed down by labor dispute with the plumbers. Lumbering is at full stride.

MILES CITY, Baker, Broadus, Ekalaka, Colstrip, Forsyth—(90 jobseekers; 73 men, 17 women; 14 men and 8 women over 45). Labor demand at low level. Farm spending curtained by low price level, complicated by threat of drouth; business labor demand shrinks in proportion. New telephone building begun after long delay, other construction limited in extent.

MISSOULA, Drummond, Arlee, Superior—(498 jobseekers; 343 men, 155 women; 65 men and 42 women over 45). Labor supply consists mostly of students, elder persons, and transients. Active labor demand in June, above that of a year ago and a month ago. Lumbering now fully staffed, may run short of skills. Construction is at full steam, with shortages of bricklayers and plumbers; three large commercial buildings in progress, three new bridges authorized by vote for fall start.

POLSON—(125 jobseekers; 76 men and 49 women; 19 men and 5 women over 45). Shortage of the cherry crop, by about 75 to 90 percent, reduces the prospect of picking and packing employment this season. Road construction job at St. Ignatius half completed, another held up by right of way conflicts. Agricultural demand stronger than normal for haying and beet work.

SHELBY, Chester, Conrad—(69 jobseekers; 39 men, 30 women; 8 men and 5 women over 45). Construction employment is near top level. Grain terminal being erected; road jobs, street work, home and business buildings under way. Labor supply adequate. Paving job discourages tourist traffic, resulting in less demand from trade and service. Farm hand demand also down.

SIDNEY—(76 jobseekers; 51 men, 25 women; 7 men and 1 woman over 45). Construction demand for workers has not kept up to expectations. Two new homes have been started and the eight million dollar power plant is in beginning stage, with little labor requirement thus far. City hall building is nearly complete, new armory to start soon, along with a small office building. Drouth slows business and some affected ranchmen are seeking other work. Beet work being handled by 850 Texans and 440 Mexican nationals.

THOMPSON FALLS, Hot Springs—(114 jobseekers; 101 men, 13 women; 32 men and 5 women over 45). Labor supply dwindled through June, though construction workers are arriving. Logging and lumbering is at full pace for the first time since last fall. No shortage of woods skills. Hiring on Noxon dam is increasing. Prime contract has been started and minor contracts are in full operation,

WOLF POINT, Plentywood, Scobey—(62 jobseekers; 37 men, 25 women; 7 men and 4 women over 45). Work applicants are mostly women and students. Construction hires were up in June, trade hires fewer than year ago. Construction items include two service stations, a bridge, 1,400 storage bins, water and sewer contract, all begun in June, and four schools, three churches, a bridge, residences, and a rural telephone line started earlier. Drouth is restricting farm hiring and farm production.

ESTIMATED EMPLOYMENT IN NON-AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES IN MONTANA (1)

(Produced in co-operation with United States Bureau of Labor Statistics)

INDUSTRY	EMPLOYMENT			Net Change	
	June 1956 (2)	May 1956 (3)	June 1955	May '56 to June '56	June '55 to June '56
NONAGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES	168,800	163,300	166,800	5,500	2,000
Manufacturing	21,400	20,000	21,000	1,400	400
Durable goods	13,800	12,600	13,300	1,200	500
Lumber and timber products	8,100	6,900	7,700	1,200	400
Primary metals	4,300	4,400	4,300	—100	00
Other (4)	1,400	1,300	1,300	100	100
Nondurable goods	7,600	7,400	7,700	200	—100
Food and kindred products	3,700	3,400	3,800	300	—100
Printing and publishing	1,600	1,600	1,600	00	00
Petroleum refining	1,300	1,300	1,300	00	00
Other (5)	1,000	1,100	1,000	—100	00
Mining	11,600	11,700	11,900	—100	—300
Metal mining	8,600	8,700	8,300	—100	300
Coal, quarrying and nonmetallic	800	800	900	00	—100
Petroleum-natural gas production	2,200	2,200	2,700	00	—500
Contract Construction	13,400	12,400	12,600	1,000	800
Contractors, building construction	5,900	5,400	5,200	500	700
Contractors, other than building	3,300	2,900	3,600	400	—300
Contractors, special trade	4,200	4,100	3,800	100	400
Transportation and utilities	22,300	22,000	22,600	300	—300
Interstate railroads	12,700	12,400	13,300	300	—600
Transportation except railroads	3,800	3,800	3,800	00	00
Utilities including communicaion	5,800	5,800	5,500	00	300
Trade	40,900	40,000	40,900	900	00
Wholesale trade	9,000	8,900	8,700	100	300
Retail trade	31,900	31,100	32,200	800	—300
General merchandise and apparel	5,800	5,800	6,200	00	—400
Food stores	4,300	4,300	4,600	00	—300
Eating and drinking establishments	8,200	7,600	8,300	600	—100
Automotive and filling stations	6,500	6,300	6,200	200	300
Retail trade not elsewhere classified	7,100	7,100	6,900	00	200
Finance, insurance and real estate	5,800	5,700	5,300	100	500
Services and miscellaneous	21,200	20,100	21,400	1,100	—200
Hotels, rooming houses, camps, etc.	3,800	2,900	3,900	900	—100
Personal services	2,300	2,200	2,300	100	00
Other (6)	15,100	15,000	15,200	100	—100
Government	32,200	31,400	31,100	800	1,100
Federal	8,900	7,800	8,800	1,100	100
State and local	23,300	23,600	22,300	—300	1,000
Great Falls Area (Cascade County)	19,400	18,900	18,900	500	500
Manufacturing	2,900	2,800	3,000	100	—100
Contract construction	1,900	1,800	1,800	100	100
Transportation and utilities	2,400	2,400	2,500	00	—100
Trade, wholesale and retail	5,900	5,800	5,700	100	200
Services and miscellaneous (7)	3,700	3,600	3,600	100	100
Government	2,600	2,500	2,300	100	300

(1) Estimates include all full and part-time wage and salary workers who worked or received pay during the pay period ending nearest the 15th of the month. Proprietors, firm members personnel of the armed forces, domestic servants, and self-employed persons are excluded.

(2) Preliminary estimates based on return from sample of 650 selected Montana establishments.

(3) Figures previously released have been revised on returns from 1,062 such establishments.

(4) Includes fabricated metal products, machinery except electrical, furniture, stone and clay products.

(5) Includes apparel, chemicals, and miscellaneous manufacturing products.

(6) Includes commercial trade schools, auto repair services and garages, miscellaneous repair services and hand trades, motion pictures, amusements and recreation, medical and health, law offices and professional services, nonprofit membership organizations and business not otherwise classified.

(7) Same as (6) above, also includes finance, real estate and mining.

COMPARISON OF BASIC LABOR MARKET TRANSACTIONS IN JUNE, 1956, AND JUNE, 1955

Employment Service Office	New Job Applicants				Jobseekers in File				Job Placements								U. I. Claims Wk. 7-6	
	Jun. 1956		Jun. 1955		Jun. 1956		Jun. 1955		Jun. 1956				Jun. 1955					
	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	Ind.	Ag.	Tot.	Vet.	Ind.	Ag.	Tot.	Vet.	1956	1955
Anaconda	44	14	32	4	66	19	66	8	36	15	51	18	31	13	44	13	40*	40
Billings	777	263	675	132	591	175	706	197	403	765	1,168	251	380	1,466	1,846	186	221	292
Bozeman	186	47	204	49	274	107	228	52	284	200	484	121	216	104	320	90	9	17
Butte	482	142	302	78	617	142	508	105	131	28	159	51	241	11	252	169	211	199
Cut Bank	82	19	84	24	92	26	131	41	58	94	152	82	39	54	93	27	25	57
Dillon	71	31	81	39	73	21	67	19	36	81	117	64	29	72	101	55	13	13
Glasgow	174	64	146	39	63	10	333	98	202	132	334	153	159	130	289	88	23	32
Glendive	131	48	54	22	74	24	87	25	103	195	298	59	86	145	231	59	16	23
Great Falls	611	172	501	143	521	149	541	135	352	326	678	174	377	326	703	285	185	247
Hamilton	51	10	32	5	76	16	108	26	37	292	329	24	59	425	484	20	27	33
Havre	104	24	116	29	56	9	53	6	272	91	363	168	209	82	291	146	11	19
Helena	360	80	182	32	187	40	364	114	225	72	297	104	138	67	205	75	67	78
Kalispell	280	68	495	91	796	184	725	162	196	9	205	50	138	18	156	55	149	201
Lewistown	68	17	49	9	78	14	53	7	27	39	66	19	37	72	109	50	29	35
Livingston	93	17	69	16	96	21	154	44	114	50	164	50	69	65	134	38	26	33
Miles City	106	29	59	17	90	19	79	21	64	457	521	60	79	292	371	146	26	40
Missoula	348	108	217	56	498	158	440	147	285	393	678	174	136	230	366	79	122	165
Polson	107	23	155	11	125	20	268	25	53	75	128	26	30	13	43	5	39	39
Shelby	81	23	93	28	69	13	122	22	67	175	242	43	61	81	142	64	26	26
Sidney	67	7	52	9	76	8	81	15	50	439	489	20	48	450	498	25	19	24
Thomp. Fls.	28	6	67	15	114	25	105	37	58	—	58	30	27	3	30	15	39	55
Wolf Point	79	18	52	20	62	15	55	14	55	34	89	30	39	37	76	31	13	22
TOTALS	4,330	1,230	3,717	868	4,694	1,215	5,274	1,320	3,108	3,962	7,070	1,771	2,628	4,156	6,784	1,721	1,336	1,690

*Includes 38 claims of Federal Employees UC program instituted January 1, 1955.

AVERAGE HOURS AND EARNINGS IN SELECTED MONTANA INDUSTRIES

(Produced in co-operation with United States Bureau of Labor Statistics)
(Hours and earnings data exclude administrative and salaried personnel)

INDUSTRY	Average Weekly Earnings			Average Weekly Hours			Average Hourly Earnings		
	June (1) 1956	May (2) 1956	June 1955	June (1) 1956	May (2) 1956	June 1955	June (1) 1956	May (2) 1956	June 1955
All Manufacturing	90.04	90.74	82.95	40.8	41.0	40.2	2.21	2.21	2.07
Durable goods	91.33	92.13	84.33	41.4	41.8	40.7	2.21	2.20	2.07
Primary metals	98.70	98.70	77.53	45.1	45.1	39.7	2.19	2.19	1.95
Nondurable goods	87.24	87.92	80.46	39.4	39.5	39.2	2.22	2.23	2.05
Food and kindred products	72.71	72.38	70.77	40.0	39.8	40.9	1.82	1.82	1.73
All Mining	101.25	102.48	94.21	41.4	41.8	41.3	2.44	2.45	2.28
Metal mining	102.71	102.80	97.09	42.1	42.2	42.8	2.44	2.44	2.27
Transportation and Utilities (except railrds.)	83.19	83.53	77.88						
Transportation (except railroads)	97.95	98.68	87.00						
Utilities and communication	75.96	76.00	73.61	40.6	40.6	41.0	1.87	1.87	1.79

(1) Preliminary estimates. (2) Figures previously released have been revised on more complete returns.

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